

An Unexpected Arrival and an Unrepeatable Departure

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[0 : 00] Let's turn for one final time to Luke chapter 24. Luke chapter 24 and the verses from verse 36 from there to the end of the Gospel of Luke.

We've been on a long journey. This is our 87th study in the Gospel of Luke. I can't remember the exact date at which we began it, but I want to thank you for your patience as you have kept up with these studies as it's taken us all of that time.

Some of it wasn't easy going. There are parts to the Gospel of Luke that are very difficult, not just difficult to understand, but certainly difficult to apply and also to receive the teaching that he gives us in parts of his Gospel regarding lostness, regarding sin, regarding things which we know are to do with the judgment of God and his view of those who are unsaved.

But one of the great things, the great thing about our study has been that we have journeyed with Christ. That it's been from beginning to end all about Jesus.

From the time that we began with Luke as he comes to announce the purpose for which he was writing this book, that it was to tell us about the ministry of Jesus Christ.

[1 : 31] Then he took us into the circumstances of the announcement of his birth, his actual birth, then the following events at that time in the Lord's early history.

Then he took us through his public ministry and all the various events of that, including one long journey that Jesus himself took all the way to Jerusalem, where he finally was crucified and died for his people.

And we've seen how Luke led us to the resurrection, to the announcement of it, and to the risen Jesus finally meeting with these two disciples on the road to Emmaus, how he revealed himself to them, how he taught them that everything in the Scriptures that were written about him were there so that they might understand what these things were about, that he was the central figure of these Scriptures.

Now then, do we know Jesus better since we began our studies? Are we more familiar with him than we were before?

Have we come to know him on a personal level more so than when we began 87 studies ago? Have we a different relationship with him than that which we had with him when we began the journey?

[2 : 57] These are questions for me and questions for you. It doesn't matter whether you're a professing Christian, whether you may even not yet be saved, or whether you've been following the Lord for many years.

The question is the same. Do I know Jesus better tonight than when I began looking at Luke's account of him?

Well, let's look at how Luke comes to conclude his Gospel, and we'll come back to the same sort of question or issues at the end of this final study. There are two things that he tells us here.

First of all, an unexpected visit or appearance from Jesus, and then an unrepeatable departure on the part of Jesus. These are the two things that he tells us as he concludes his account of Christ's ministry on earth.

Here's first of all an unexpected visit that happened just as the disciples there were discussing, talking about these amazing things that they had just recently come to know of, the resurrection of Jesus, the meeting of these disciples with him, how he had also appeared to Simon, and all of that buzz that this had caused among the disciples.

[4 : 13] And just there and then, Jesus appeared in the midst of them. And he appeared in the midst of them, we learn here, for two reasons. First of all, to prove that he was indeed risen from the dead, that this was no fairy story, that this was something they should really and truly believe and place confidence in.

He was there to prove that he was indeed risen from the dead. And he was there, secondly, so that he would teach them the scriptures about himself.

Because he had a purpose for them in the world. And that purpose was, as we'll see, that they would be his witnesses. That they would carry the message of the risen Jesus who died on the cross.

And bring that to the world as a basis for hope for human beings. And in order to actually demonstrate to them that this was his purpose for them, he opened their mind that they would understand the scriptures.

And so that they would carry what he had taught them here further into the development of their life as his church in the world. The unexpected visit was to prove that he was risen and to teach them the scriptures.

[5 : 33] Let's look at these in turn. Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, Peace be to you. But they were startled and frightened and thought that they saw a spirit or a ghost, you might say.

And he said to them, Why are you troubled and why do doubts arise in your heart? See, my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. And so on. Now they were scared. And you and I would have been scared as well.

Because he just suddenly appeared. It wasn't that he opened the door or knocked the door and they opened the door to him. He just appeared. And that was something that was true of the risen Jesus.

That he came and left meetings like that. Even when they were meeting within locked doors, Jesus had access to them and stood amongst them. And then he would leave just as quickly and disappear from their sight.

And here he comes to reveal himself, to stand amongst them. Just imagine, even that tonight, supposing we were in a discussion of things about the Lord Jesus Christ and his resurrection, all of a sudden you are aware of a presence there.

[6 : 40] And you look, and there he is. And it's himself. That's the circumstances. These are the circumstances they had. And they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit.

It's interesting, isn't it? That even though they had been told that he had appeared to Simon, and that he was indeed risen from the dead, having been taught to that by these two disciples who met him on the road to Emmaus, yet the group of them here were scared.

They thought they saw a ghost. They thought this was a spirit. And Jesus set about correcting their idea and actually settling their minds.

That's what Jesus does. When you have your mind unsettled, when you have things which disturb you, and you bring them to Christ, and Christ himself comes to handle them, that doesn't mean the things that frighten you go away.

It doesn't mean that you will not have any further doubts and any further agitations of your mind or of your heart, but it does mean that he gives you the ability and the capacity to bear them by knowing that he's with you in them.

[7 : 55] And he comes here to, first of all, prove this to them, that he is indeed risen from the dead. He says, See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.

Touch me and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see, that I have. He was proving to them that it was no spirit, no ghost, that it was actually a real body that he had, a body now risen from the dead, that he himself had taken back into connection with his human spirit.

He is the complete human being, and that humanity is connected indivisibly, or inseparably rather, with his divine nature.

Here is the Son of God, still in our nature, but now risen from the dead. And he says, This is really myself. Now that's an important point.

Why? Because they have to be convinced, as you and I have to be convinced, that Jesus has really come through death, and come through his time in the grave, and come through resurrection from the dead, to be the very person risen from the dead, the same person all the way through.

[9 : 16] This is not a different person. This is not something someone knew that Jesus handed things over to just before he died.

This is the same Christ, in the same body, in a different state, risen from the dead, with death behind him, with none of what you associate with death any more connected with him.

And you want that Savior. That's the Savior you need. You need a Savior who came to death and conquered death for you by dying the death he died.

And you need a Savior who, despite the fact that he died that death, actually came to rise from the dead powerfully, so as to overcome death completely.

And you need the Savior who you know is the very same person all through these various events. Because you know, when it is the same person, that he has been through all of these things for you.

[10 : 27] And that when you place your confidence in him, when you believe in him, when you give your life to him, well, you are safely conducted then through death and on to resurrection and upwards to glory.

And he confirms his ministry in that regard, that he is, in fact, the same person that they knew before he died. Handle me, he says, and see.

He showed them his hands and his feet. Now, that would have, and we understand, that would have had evidences there that it was indeed himself, the wounds with which he was wounded.

There is a mystery about that, but why would he show them his hands and his feet if not to show that these, in fact, were the hands and the feet that were tied to the cross? And the evidences, and as well as his side, where it was pierced with the spear, was still there, that this, in fact, was the same Jesus, but now risen from the dead.

Not a phantom, not a ghost, not a spirit, the actual Jesus who died, was now alive, was now risen from the dead.

[11 : 41] And you notice the first thing he said to them, Peace be to you. Three words, in English, and how much is packed into them.

Because what he is saying is far more than just giving them a quiet spirit, and an acceptance of this, and a freedom now from the disturbance and the fright that they got when they actually thought that he was a spirit.

That is certainly part of it, but it is by no means the whole of it, not as indeed, as it indeed the most of what he means by Peace be to you. What he means by Peace be to you is, here is what I have bought for you.

Here is peace with God. Here is my legacy to you, my disciples. This is why I died, so that you would have a peace with God, so that your sins would be forgiven, so that they would be covered from God's sight, so that you would no longer come into condemnation, and when you come to face the judgment of God, you will be approved of by him.

Peace be to you. That is what Paul wrote, wasn't it, to the Romans when he came to write to them of this great salvation.

[13 : 05] Therefore he says in chapter 5, Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Peace be to you. Peace with God. Peace of conscience. Peace of heart. Peace with one another.

How extensive this peace is. It's a great ocean of peace. It comes to flood your life. As it comes into your soul, it has a relationship with God involved.

It has a relationship to each other involved. It has a relation even between the parts of your soul. That there is a peace which characterizes a person who knows Jesus as their Savior.

[14 : 07] They have an inward peace, knowing that all is well in his hands. But then you see, he also goes further, he says, Why are you troubled?

And why do doubts arise in your hearts? They're troubled, because they haven't yet appreciated that this indeed is the whole Christ, the very one that they knew before he died, but now risen from the dead.

And it extends to our doubts as well. What he's really saying to us tonight is having gone through the Gospel of Luke, having looked at Luke's great question, Who is this man?

Having heard the way Luke himself answers it from the various ways in which people came to make their confession of Christ as to who he was and who he was to them. Here he is saying to you tonight, Why do you still have doubts?

Why do you have doubts about what your relationship to him should be? Why do you have doubts about putting your trust and your confidence in him? Why do you have doubts about leaving the life with which you entered the world and instead come to live a new life in Jesus Christ?

[15 : 27] Why do you have doubts about the need to turn your back upon worldliness and upon sin and upon your lostness and upon losing that relationship with your lostness that you need to lose in order to be saved?

Why do you have doubts? Why do you have doubts about whether that is for you or not? Why do you have doubts about whether it's the right time now for you or not? Why do you have doubts about any of these things in relation to this Jesus?

Why do you reason like this? He's saying to you I'm not asking the question it's not my question it's the Lord's question it's the Lord addressing you and addressing me through this word and as a Christian tonight as a Christian who knows the Lord why do you have doubts?

Why do you have doubts about him? I know we have plenty of doubts about ourselves we have plenty of doubts about how we ourselves can manage things doubts about our abilities doubts about many things as we look in on ourselves but that's the problem that's the problem Jesus is actually saying to us take your eyes off yourself and the more you fix your gaze on me as the complete Christ the Christ whose death is sufficient for my sins the Christ whose resurrection is sufficient to keep me from the clutches of death the more you fix your eyes on that complete Christ the more convinced you will be that he is for you the less doubt you will have as to how your relationship to him should be why doubt?

isn't he enough? isn't he good enough? isn't he big enough to take all your weight? doesn't he have an ability to take all your burdens great and small?

[17 : 24] will he not teach you everything you need to know? is he not the greatest companion? is he not the one whose word is sure?

why do you doubt anything about him? well he came to prove that he was risen and he came to prove that he was risen so as to dispel their doubts secondly he came to teach them the scriptures notice in verses 44 to how you find there these are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you and everything written in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled we've left a bit before that because it follows just as part of the demonstration that he really was risen from the dead he was a real person he had in fact a physical side to him he took this piece of broiled fish and he ate it before them they saw for themselves this was no ghost no spirit but a real living human being who took food to prove that he was so then he said these are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled and then as you compare that with verse 27 when they were on the way to Emmaus you remember he gave them that great sermon beginning with Moses and all the prophets he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself pretty much the same thing as you find here everything in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled except you then come to this dynamic sentence this incredible sentence this this wonderful sentence this tremendous emphasis this singularly important point then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures how do you come to understand the scriptures how do you come to understand them in the depth of their spiritual meaning and importance how do you come to understand them in a way that says about the scriptures this is the book for me this is the book that must shape my life this is where

I find my guidance this is what I must take with me every day and pattern my life accordingly how do you actually come to understand the scriptures in a way that says the laws the commands the instructions that I find are just as important as the promises and the encouragements and the comforts how do you come to understand the scriptures so that you see with the eyes of your soul the significance of Jesus Christ by having your mind opened there are three things open in this chapter there's Christ settled there's secondly the scriptures and there's thirdly their minds and they all relate to each other he opened their mind to understand the scriptures he opened the scriptures to understand his resurrection the tomb that was opened that's how it must be for yourself and myself everybody in here tonight who understands the scriptures spiritually who has come really to know

Christ in them who comes looking for Christ's voice as they read the scriptures their minds have been opened their mind has come to be opened by the Lord himself and there is really such a great point to always bear in mind that Christ himself above everyone else has access to our minds he knows our minds he knows the working of our minds he knows our understanding he knows the working of our understanding he knows how to open our minds to understand the scriptures it is he who gives us the ability it is he who brings to us this mind that will as he opens it come to realize more and more of the teaching and of the value of the Bible whenever you come to read the Bible pray that Christ will open your understanding don't try to understand it yourself don't try and understand it just by going by any sermons you hear the minister speaking of don't understand it just by anything that you read in books all of these things are tremendously important but by themselves they will never open your understanding it is Christ who has the key to unlock your mind and to open your mind on a daily basis to understand the scriptures that is why the scriptures are so incredibly important that is why coming to gather together in church services like this is so incredibly important this is where the unlocking of minds takes place yes Jesus can do it when you are sitting on your own and reading the Bible at home when you have to pray as we have said that that is what will happen that God and Christ will actually open your mind to understand what you are reading but it is to this preaching of the gospel that he has particularly attached the promise that faith comes by hearing and hearing the word of Christ and when somebody asks you why do you go to church why is it important to you to go to church you have to reply to them it is not a matter of just going to church it is not a matter of just putting in an appearance it is not a matter of being there to please the minister or so that my elder will see that

I have actually made it to church this week they have to say I am going to church because that is where Jesus opens my mind that is where I come to better understand bit by bit the scriptures that tell me about him so we must never neglect or see as unimportant our gatherings in public as a people worshipping the Lord where the word is preached it is where Jesus comes to open our minds and you see he then went on to tell them about the centrality of his own person and his work in the scriptures and their teaching thus it was written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem and you are witnesses of these things behold I am sending the promise of my father by that he meant the Holy

[24 : 48] Spirit that he had promised would send once he was ascended to glory but he said stay in the city until that happens until you be endued or clothed with power from on high now all of these things are connected together by him they come in a proper sequence he tells them that the substance the center core of the scriptures and their teaching is about himself and especially his sufferings and his death and his resurrection from the dead that's the base from which the need to repent and believe and receive forgiveness of sins that's the basis on which that repentance and forgiveness is placed on what is our repentance placed what is its basis what is its foundation what does it rest upon our own ability to repent the quality of our prayers no on the person of christ on the death the resurrection the ascension of jesus but you do notice that his death and resurrection are very closely connected with repentance and forgiveness and that repentance and forgiveness are to be proclaimed in his name to all nations in other words the point that that is making is don't imagine for one moment that you can leave repentance and forgiveness out of the proclamation of the gospel and don't imagine for a moment that repentance and forgiveness can be minimized when you actually seek to set out what salvation is why has luke spent so much time telling us about jesus because he knew that we need to repent of our sins and that in repenting of our sins turning from them to god confessing them with a sense of our guilt to god that in doing so we need to come absolutely sure that there is something there that will meet our need as lost sinners to cover our sins from god's sight and it is there in this person in his death in his resurrection so you come as one of the prophets put it to a fountain that has been opened for sin and uncleanness that sinless person when you come to him and you repent of your sin and you seek forgiveness for your sins from god the first thing you meet with is jesus christ the mercy of god in him the certainty of forgiveness for all who repent and he says that that too should be proclaimed and you are my witnesses of these things now why did he add that well for one thing it is added so that when we go out with the gospel whether we are preaching it or living it out in our lives being witnesses meant for these people immediately then that they had seen jesus for themselves in other words when they went out with the gospel they were able to say to those that they met this is not a fairy story this is not a theory that human beings have put together this is not a myth this is really historical events this is about a

real person and it's a real person that meets a very real need as sinners that's why he says you are my witnesses and in coming to proclaim the gospel through preaching and through witnessing we come to be based upon the reality that christ is and we seek to demonstrate to people we are not talking about fables we present to you a living person who died for our sins that is the essence of the gospel an unexpected visit to prove that he was risen to teach them the scriptures and then secondly more briefly an unrepeatable departure the arrival was unexpected the departure was unrepeatable would never happen again just as once and once only he led them out as far as

Bethany and lifting up his hands he blessed them while he blessed them he parted from them and was carried up into heaven notice three things Jesus leading them that was very important to them that's what they knew of him as he was physically with them all the way up to the time of his death and now that he's risen from the dead what does he do he leads them out as far as to Bethany they knew the way to Bethany they would have gone to Bethany if he had told them go to Bethany but he led them out and he wanted them to understand that although he was just about to be taken from them and pass on into heaven he was still going to lead them he was still their leader he was still the one who showed them the way that's why we are known as followers of Jesus we don't just follow his teaching we follow himself because he is our leader he's our commander he's the one who goes ahead of us into every step of our journey through life who is this man who is the leader in your life who is guiding your steps who are you following or what are you following as you make your way through life is it this great leader or someone else or are you just depending on yourself that somehow things will work out well here is secondly

Jesus blessing them while he blessed them he lifted up his hands as he blessed them while he blessed them he was parted from them now that reminds us the lifting up of his hands and blessing them reminds us of Aaron in the Old Testament doesn't it Aaron the high priest that in the name of God was to pronounce a blessing on the people of Israel the Lord bless you and keep you the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace here is the Lord himself with his hands physically outstretched over his disciples and blessing them in the act of blessing them in the priestly act of blessing them as he is now their high priest but you notice while he blessed them he parted or was parted from them and was carried up into heaven just imagine put yourself in that situation and just imagine that you're there looking at this Jesus with his hands outstretched blessing you pronouncing a blessing and as he's doing so all of a sudden he's lifted up with his hands still uplifted he goes up higher until he disappears out of your sight and he's gone but you never saw him letting his hands down why not because Jesus was teaching these disciples that although he was now being parted from them they were not being parted from his blessing that although he was going to disappear from their sight and no more physically be with them he was still going to continue to bless them and to bless them as he put it here when the promise of the father the holy spirit would come upon you whose blessing reaches his people through the holy spirit who is of course himself

God it's the blessing of the savior the blessing of Jesus it was finally blessed them as he was still blessing them his continuing blessing is what they saw as he was taken out of their sight how wonderful it is tonight to realize that the chief activity of Jesus in glory is blessing his people yes even you and I that his hands are stretched out over you and all the time through his remembrance of you through his intercession for you through his work through the holy spirit in your heart he is continually blessing and that blessing will never end all the way through eternity

[34 : 45] Jesus will be blessing his people they will be partakers of this legacy of blessing that he has purchased for them one thing is sure eternity doesn't have an end but the Lord's people will not feel it long because they will constantly be under refreshing blessing from Christ you know yourselves the great statue that was built over Rio de Janeiro the statue of the Christ a massive structure it's 30 meters high higher than this building because it's on a base that's something like 8 meters high so it's nearly 40 meters high altogether and it's actually on top of a mountain that's over 2000 feet high and the outstretched arms of the statue are over 20 meters from one hand to the other it's an awesome sight when you see it in a photograph taken from the air for example and you look at people actually thronging around it they're like little flies compared to this massive structure that represents

Jesus Christ the Redeemer but it's nothing like this that's made of concrete it's not active it can't bless you this is the real thing and if it's an awesome sight to see Christ the Redeemer over Rio de Janeiro how incredibly awesome it is to realize how the risen Christ has his hands stretched out over all his people in all generations constantly blessing them that's what you read that's how Luke comes to finish his gospel and he then comes to say they worshipped him and returned to

Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple blessing God now there's the question all the way through this gospel Luke's been asking this question you may be tired of us bringing it up but it's there so that we will take very careful note of it who is this man what is he about what does he mean to us what does he mean to you and here is Luke's way of concluding his message he is the God we worship rightly in other words he's telling us when you've read everything he's written about this Christ the only adequate response is to fall down in his presence and worship him as your God that's what he's saying to us and that's what we have to truly ourselves engage in and we can truly boast in the right proper way in other words not be ashamed before anyone that we are worshippers of this

Christ so we've been with Dr. Luke he was a medical man that comes through as we saw in some of the references he makes in his gospel as he puts things at times in medical terms he was a man who took a great interest in people's conditions because he was trained medically so you could say that what we've done is spent some time with him in his surgery in fact we have 87 consultations with him he's brought out a diagnosis for us of our condition of our need as sinners along with that he's written a prescription for us and there are just two words on it but it's all we need Jesus Christ and as we close the gospel of Luke as we close the door of a surgery behind us there's one question that remains are we prepared to take the medication will we take this man to be our saviour forevermore let's pray our gracious

God and our father in heaven how we thank you tonight for your son how we thank you for your giving of him to be our saviour Lord we recognise from your word what you gave him to that you gave him to the death that we deserved that you gave him to your own wrath and curse to fall upon him in our place that you laid upon him the iniquity of us all and you remind us in your word oh Lord of how it was in your great love that you did this for sinners we thank you too oh Lord that you came so willingly into this world that you are willing to be born into it and into its conditions and to be born into it in our nature we thank you for your willingness to serve in it as the servant of the father we thank you for your willingness to die in it in the place of you people we thank you for that death you died for it its comprehensiveness for its completeness in dealing with our sin for its acceptance with the father we thank you for your resurrection from the dead for that tomb that was seen to be empty of your body and yet had in itself the evidences that death was behind you we thank you for your risen appearances to your people we thank you that you are risen to glory ascended up on high leading captivity captive we thank you that you reign from your throne above that in waning from your throne above so you are the king of your people you rule and you defend them you bless them in your continuing ministry and lord we thank you that you are coming again that you will show yourself in your glory as the judge of all the earth we thank you for the assurance that your word gives us that all who trust in you will not need to be afraid even though they may be in awe grant that we may be among them for your glory's sake amen you